

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, June 29, 1895, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL On board the train near Bangor. Sat. June 29th, 1895. My darling faithful little wife:

How can I thank you for all the loving letters you have sent to me — I can only say my dear that I love you more with every passing year — and only wish I were more worthy of you than I am.

Thursday was a busy day with me — preparing for my departure for Flint. Mr. McCurdy was in the laboratory all the afternoon — being drilled to take my place. He will now carry on the experiments during my absence in Flint. I received your telegram “not to leave the laboratory” — but I feel I have a duty to perform to Elsie and Daisy — as well as to you. I cannot leave you alone much longer. If your father and mother were going to Europe that would be a different matter — or Grace. I telegraphed to Grace offering her the Point House — but she has decided not to accept.

Mrs. Kennan and Miss McCurdy decided to accept the loan of the house for Friday evening (yesterday). They are to have a “Picnic” party there and a dance. Mrs. Kennan will only invite persons that you have received yourself. They will provide their own means of coming and going — and each young lady is to bring her own cake. I say “will” but the party itself I suppose has already gone into the past.

The May-queen left Baddeck very early in the morning (Friday) as she had to go to St. Peters (I believe). The 2 canal is closed for repairs. I sent for the Zuleika and Capt. Frazer came for me at 11 o'clock. Train leaves Grand Narrows now at one.

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Unfortunately Capt. Frazer forgot to bring me my money — left it at Josy McLeane — so we had to cross the Bay before setting out for Grand Narrows. Then Mr. McCurdy stopped the boat — so that he might take a few snap-shots at H. M. S. Canada in Baddeck Harbor.

Result, Bridge was closed at Grand Narrows and train just moving off when we reached there. They anchored the Zuleika near the shore on the Iona side — and the Capt. put me safely on shore in his corkle-shell of a boat — in spite of the heavy sea and strong tide — and wind.

I reached the Iona Station just as the train drew up — and prevailed upon the conductor to wait for my trunk.

It looked as if it would swamp the boat. Smash down it went — upon one of the oars — breaking it in two — but Capt. Frazer was equal to the emergency — and paddled quickly to shore with only one — while the train backed on to the bridge so as to bring the baggage car near the landing place. So I just caught the train — waved my adieus to Mr. McCurdy, Mr. Ellis and the Engineer on he Zuleika and to Capt. Frazer in his corkle-shell craft — and was off.

On reaching the Straights of Canso — I received the following telegram. “Zuleika fouled with bridge and abandoned — now drifting in Grand Lake — boiler burnt out, men after her (signed) Capt. Frazer.”

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At Truro found a duplicate message to same effect. Have wired Mr. McCurdy for further particulars. Expect telegram at Parker House. I can imagine the scene — although as yet I have received no further news than that given above. Zuleika was anchored by stern opposite last span of bridge. Capt. Frazer had called my attention earlier in the day — to steam mixed with water blowing off — and spoke about good water being lost to boiler. Well! I suppose the Engineer was looking at the small boat landing — instead of at his

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engine — and thus allowed the water in the boiler — all to evaporate — so that when anchor was lifted there was no power to work propeller. She was so close to bridge — that wind and tide carried her against it — whereupon Mr. McCurdy, Mr. Ellis, Capt. Frazer and his engineer — climbed up on bridge, Zuleika was then swept under the bridge — and out into the great Bras d' Or lake. I have telegraphed to Mr. McCurdy to know whether any one was hurt.

I presume that no news on this point is good news. I don't know whether Capt. Frazer and his engineer can swim — but do know that Mr. Ellis and Mr. McCurdy could escape in that way if necessary. Dying to know details. Will enclose telegrams at Boston.

Have met a gentleman on train to whom I have taken a great fancy — a Mr. Kennelly of Philadelphia. A handsome young man — thoroughly up in scientific matters.

For Daisy's sake I shall ask him — “whether he uses both the double and single-hand alphabets”. Will ask him now — 4 and put down the result.

Poor Daisy Prepare for the reply. Glad there is no chance for Elsie and Daisy to quarrel over him — handsome — nice — and a gentleman. If he is — not — I shall have to invite him to our house in Washington sometime so that — we may talk over science together!

Here he comes. Will ask him now.

He says he is — no he is not — so I have given him a cordial invitation to our house — but — his father is 63. “Just 30 years older than I am” said he! — so I have given him an invitation for his own sake.

Can't write any more in this shaky old car. Will only say I propose going down to Washington either before or after returning to Baddeck to see how laboratory experiments progress — and whether laboratory can remain running during my absence in France, Switzerland or other unknown parts.

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Glad to hear such good accounts of Elsie and Daisy. Hope they will be able to talk English when I arrive. Don't want them to be Frenchified altogether . I would be careful to know beforehand the character of the books they read. French literature is not always desirable.

Your loving husband, Alec. Mrs. A. G. Bell, Paris, France. Parker House — Boston —
June 29th, 1895. Just arrived. Telegram from Mr. McCurdy says: 5 "Launch swept under bridge by tide all hands jumped safely on bridge. Ellis and I boarded launch and towed her to Port Alexandria, returning by express, late for party. No one injured." A.G.B.